MICROCOSM

FALL
1980

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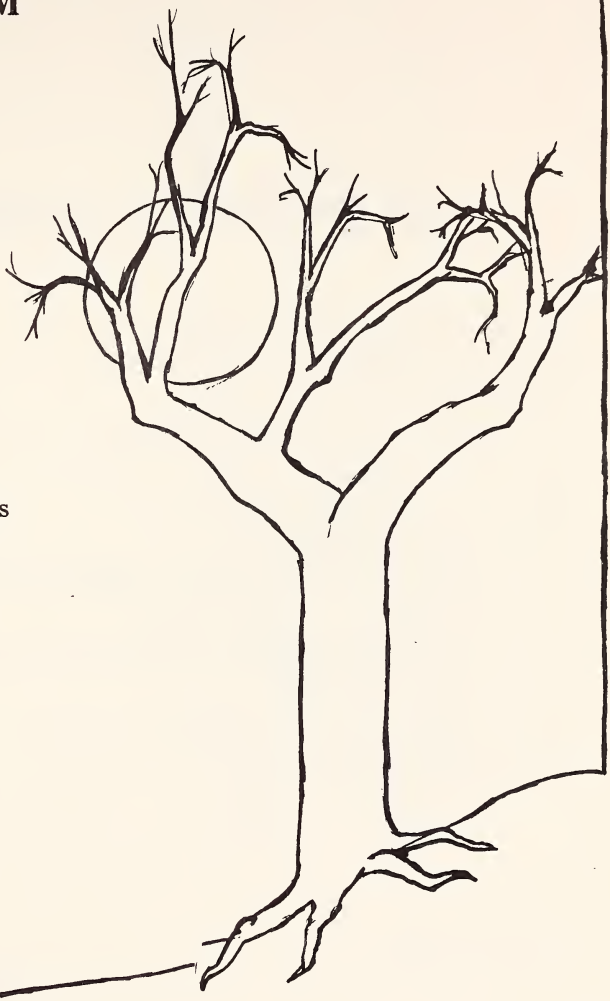

Vol. VIII **No. 1**

Copiah-Lincoln Junior College
Wesson, Mississippi

MICROCOSM

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Cover Design ..... Don Hardy
Illustrators ..... Laurie Sills, Margaret Fleming, Don Hardy

Reminder: The deadline for the spring **Microcosm** literary competition is January 15, 1981, for college students and February 1, 1981, for high school students.

Winter Warning

Don Hardy

Hush. A small white sparkle falls from above.
Other follow nearby!
Is it time yet? Did not the trees and the
Mountains warn us?
Take cover!
Wait.
Look closely, watch how the sky comes alive;
It moves with such rhythm.

Should we flee or stay?
Can beauty be for sight only?
For cold and damp is its heart;
Powerful its strength in numbers,
And fearful to our senses.
Yet so frail by itself it vanishes.
Save the rare moment it brushes earth's
surface.

We must make ready soon.
For tomorrow our paths will be blocked
And its presence hated.

But for now we stand and watch
And wonder.

The Magic Moment

Bill Sumrall

The wind was cold. Henry wiggled deeper into his coat as he strained to lift yet another spadeful of earth. He'd been digging steadily for two hours now, scooping the moist brown dirt up and out, up and out. It was difficult work, and Henry could not see how gravediggers stood the monotonous drudgery. He supposed machinery did the job easier, quicker, more efficiently nowadays.

But one good, sturdy shovel and one strong back did the job just as well, thought Henry as he heaved another load of soil skyward out of the deep pit.

The late afternoon sun sank deeper towards the horizon, creating longer purple shadows from the many monuments in the cemetery. The purple shadows pointed thickly in the direction of the oblong hole Henry stood and labored in.

Minutes spilled from Henry's shovel, like time in an hour-glass. The shadows creeped nearer the oblong hole, some touching Henry's head as it bobbed up moment to moment. A street light suspended above the road winding past the cemetery flickered fitfully.

Henry thought again of his brother. Danny had looked so thin and tired the last time Henry saw him. He regretted putting off that last visit to the insane asylum. He had always hated the place, which was why he visited Danny so infrequently. Danny had seemed happy there, though, and had welcomed Henry's last visit with the same enthusiasm as he had the other few and far between visits.

"I've not been idle, oh, no, not me!" Henry remembered Danny saying. "You'll be delighted to know that I've decided to go on tour with the magic show again — it'll mark my return as 'Danny the Daring, World's Greatest Magician!' And I even have a completely new routine, one I've been considering since my forced retirement from public life." Danny had chuckled at the words "forced retirement."

But Henry had not shared his brother's mirth. Danny's mind had shattered at the news of his wife's death when their home caught fire while Danny was away on tour. Ever since then, Danny had locked his thoughts on the single idea of how to cheat death and to return from the grave. His "new routine" generally centered around live burial for a considerable length of time, followed by a magical resurrection.

The sky had grown quite dark, and the long purple shadows merged with the growing dusk. Henry's feet ached with the increasing chill of on-coming night. It seemed to him that the deeper he dug, the colder his feet got.

Henry glanced up at the marble stone above him, remembering how he'd felt when he'd heard of his brother's death. The insane asylum's ancient furnace had exploded, catching the building on fire. Most of the patients had fled the fire, escaping unharmed. Danny died in it. Perhaps the fire had reminded Danny of his wife's death. Perhaps that is why Danny remained while the others fled.

But afterward, at the funeral (closed casket, of course), Henry could have sworn . . .

The shovel struck unyielding earth. Henry hurried to uncover the bronze

coffin lid. There was not much room to work in, and the night, its icy darkness was overtaking him.

Yes, Henry was sure of it. At the funeral, as the coffin was being lowered into the grave, Henry remembered hearing a muffled tapping. No one at the time had paid much attention, but Henry had heard it. It had taken him a long, long time — perhaps too long — to finally figure out that the tapping was part of Danny's insane "new routine." The tapping was a code. It let the audience know that the magician was ready, that all was ready for the performance.

The sun had set. The wind blew chillingly across the marble-studded cemetery. Henry's fingers grasped the corner of the bronze lid. He heard a muffled tapping sound.

Henry prayed a short prayer before tugging at the coffin's lid, for it had been over 25 years since his brother had been lowered into the dark pit.

(Mr. Sumrall graduated from Copiah-Lincoln in 1977.)

Happiness is

Chris Cole

Happiness is doing your best. It is looking at something you have done and smiling because you know you did the best you could. When a runner comes to the final few yards in a race and strains to give it all he can, he is happy whether he wins or loses because he knows he gave it all he could give. When an artist paints a picture, he is happy only when he believes he has done all he could to make the picture as good as it can be.

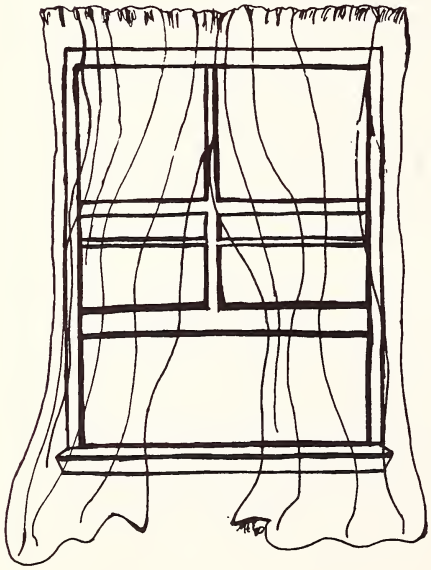
My own personal experiences have strengthened this belief in me. I can find happiness and satisfaction when I know I did my best. In sporting events, I can be happier with performances that do not win than with some that do. I'm not saying I do not like to win. Believe me, I do. But sometimes, personal victory is more important than winning.

Everyone is happy when he does his best. A father is overwhelmed with joy when he sees his son or daughter do something good because he knows he did his best to teach them right. A coach is ecstatic when his team goes undefeated because he knows he did his best to prepare them. Truly, in everyone's heart, happiness is doing your best.

Reflecting Pool

Mrs. Keith McDaniel

Oppressed by dreary fog
And matching thoughts
I topped a hill -
To find stretched before me
Brilliant goldenrod,
The reflecting pool
For a lingering sun.
Miraculously the fog
Lifted, taking
Away with it
All my dark gray thoughts,
Gone forever
In the moment
Of golden, radiant joy.



My Open Window

Margaret Fleming

As the breeze gently floats
through the open window,
I think of you
and how you swiftly breezed
through my life.
You were a welcomed breath
of fresh air.

But like the calm
before the storm,
you started twisting free.
You became a tornado,
tearing my life apart.

When the dust settled,
I picked myself up,
put all the shattered pieces
back together,
And forever
closed that open window
called, my heart.

The Outcast

Tom Welch

Often the forest has proven to be a means of escape for those who live in the city. But for some it isn't a place for refuge. Such is the story of one particular forest in the Black Mountains of North Carolina. The locals say the area in which the story was to have taken place was Linden Woods. In these woods lived a man called by the locals of the nearby town, Uncle D. He was named such because no one really knew his true name, nor did he for that matter. He had lived alone since the age of eleven and had no need for a name.

Uncle D was short, grey headed, with eyes blue as the sky but a cold, cold blue. On his face were the ravages of the many harsh winters, on his hands an abundance of age spots, and on his back a hump more obvious because he walked with a limp.

A stream passed by his shack. In it flourished any fish he so desired. Wild berries, nuts and other vegetation were within a mile of his dwelling. Beaver, turkey, and deer could be caught in his hand-made traps. All that he needed was within his reach in that beautiful area of the Smokies. Tall evergreens shaded his area, and beams of light shone through from the heavens on this utopia of sorts. Many a man would be eager to trade places with the one they called Uncle D. To some, this scene would be heaven; to him, far from it. The crisp morning air and sunny afternoons of the woods are what most men dream of.

But it was said by the locals that Uncle D was not pleased with his condition of life. Alienation and a deep hatred of the town's rejection grew daily within his soul. On occasion he would venture to the edge of town to enviously observe its life. Children playing in the school yard and ladies spreading gossip from their front porches were what he usually saw. That is until they saw him first. Almost invariably they pointed or screamed or ran. Sometimes they did all three. At that point he hurriedly retreated to his haven in Linden Woods.

One dry March night the winds whipped down from the Black Mountains into the town in the valley. It was this night that Uncle D was to free himself of his hatred. The townspeople had noticed him for several weeks gathering brush at different points above the town. They didn't dare speak to him to see what he was up to, for they feared him just because they didn't know him. His eyes were fiery with hatred and determination as he went to each bundle with his torch late that March evening. And burn the town he did — all of it. The survivors told of the families trapped in their homes and of flames reaching high into the night. The inferno could be seen in three counties. The town was half the population it had been the day before. Everything lay in ashes.

Some say Uncle D is still alive today. His prison is one of different dimensions now, for he sees only four grey walls each day and occasionally he is permitted to walk in the courtyard. Once again he is an outcast and rejected. He needed more than the beauty of the forest. What was invisible to the eye was essential to his heart. Friendship he never had — and now never will.

The Umbrella

Belynda Ballard

Hundreds of years ago in the dark jungles of Hindua, the first form of an umbrella was used. A young boy, Ninja, by name, first came up with this idea of carrying something over his head to keep the water off during a rain.

Ninja's father was the chief of the biggest tribe in Hindua. His mother was the most beautiful woman of a remote area in India. They were very much in love. Ninja's father was always doing things to show his wife how dearly he appreciated her. At this time, he wanted to give her a bouquet of the rarest orchids in the jungle. These orchids grew hundreds of miles away. However, there was a small hut where a man transported all flowers to be sold at a high price.

Early one morning Ninja's father woke him up to go and pick up the orchids from the native's hut, three miles away. Ninja quickly arose and dressed. His father was not the type to permit laziness. Ninja only had a few miles to walk. So, he walked at a slower pace to capture the true beauty of the day.

The sun was coming up over the jungles to the east of the river. The bright yellows and oranges intrigued Ninja, especially the way they seemed to dance on the drops of dew everywhere. The ground began to harden beneath his feet as the sun rose and dried up the moistness.

Ninja lay down to rest for a moment. His eyes closed and before long the boy was in his world of dreams. A small noise awakened Ninja. The sun was already straight up above his head. It was lunch time. He knew he had to hurry if he wanted to get back to the village before the heavy afternoon showers started. It was the rainy season, after all.

A few yards ahead Ninja saw the small grass hut of the native who had the orchids for sale. The native was gone, but he had left his mother-in-law in charge of the business. She was a harsh woman and demanded an extreme price for the orchids. However, her tone and price softened when she realized who this small boy's father was. She then gladly sold him the orchids along with some violets. She said these would bring out the color of the orchids and add to the fragrance.

When Ninja left the hut, he started home. After he had walked a few yards, he turned to see that the rain had already drenched the hut. He broke into a run, trying to keep the rain from the flowers. Ninja knew that if the pounding drops of rain hit the orchids and violets they would surely ruin. He also knew his father would be angry. His father would not tolerate a son who could not do a simple task.

Panic set in. Ninja had to do something to save the flowers and his own honor with his father. There was no place to hide from the rain.

Before Ninja realized, the rain was upon him. He quickly tore off his shirt and placed it over the flowers. He knew this would not last long, for the rain would soon soak through his thin shirt. But, this did give him time to think.

To his right was a small bush, about three feet high and an arm's length across. It was fully-leaved. This was not unusual in the rain season. What was strange was that the ground beneath it was dry. With one quick shove the bouquet was under the bush, safe and dry. This pleased him. He had used his brain and had saved the flowers. Now, he had to save his honor. His father was

sure to be angry if he went home after the shower. They never ended until after it was dark.

Ninja then had another great idea. He pulled up the bush and carried it home. He used it as a protective cover for the flowers. Ninja reached his home before long. His father was proud of him for keeping the flowers dry. So proud that he went out and told all the villagers about the helpful bush. And Ninja's mother was so pleased with the flowers that she made Ninja's favorite meal for supper that evening.

As for Ninja, he was pleased with the reactions of his mother and father. However, what pleased him the most was that he knew he had started something. Something that would be modified greatly. The umbrella, as it has been named, is one idea of a small boy from Hindua that the world will not soon forget.

An Eagle

Glenda Stalans

An eagle flies high in the sky,
Soars along with his friend, the air.
An endless world the eagle knows
Unlike yours and mine.
He never has a care, he never has to
Bear the troubles and cares of our time.
In the end he knows he's free,
Unlike you and me
Chained to the faults of the world.
He needs his liberty.

Excuses, Excuses, Excuses

Andy White

None of us has ever been at a loss for words when it comes to making excuses. We start learning the groundwork as soon as we learn how to talk, and by the time we are teenagers we have turned excuse-making into an art. We have excuses for everything. Excuses for being late, excuses for being early, and excuses for not showing up at all. We make excuses when we fail in our attempts and excuses for our failing to make an attempt at all. We make excuses to get into things and to get out of them. The list goes on and on. We have a ready-made excuse for just about every occasion imaginable.

Of course, there are trying occasions when you must come up with a good excuse really fast, like when your wife is supposed to be spending the weekend at her mother's and you go out with the boys and come in at two a.m. and open the front door and there she is. She's standing there with her hair up in rollers looking like the thing that ate Chicago, with a rolling pin in one hand and an iron skillet in the other and her size ten foot beating out a thump, thump, thump on the carpet and for one terrifying moment you believe that she is actually going to kill you, but only for a moment. That's as long as it takes for your steel-trap mind to come up with a really good excuse like, "WHEW! Am I ever tired! I thought I would never get that little old lady who was having the cardiac-arrest to breathing again. The doctor said she's going to be all right though, thanks to me. I rode to the hospital with her in the ambulance when the ambulance finally got there that is, and then stayed around to see if she was going to pull through." Then with a look of innocent puzzlement you ask, "Gee, honey, what are you doing home? I thought you were going to stay the whole weekend." And then with that same look of innocence, you pretend that you've just noticed the cookware in her hands and you say, "Oh, don't worry about cooking anything for me, honey. I'm too tired to eat. I think I'll just go straight to bed." If she doesn't make her assault right then and there, you've probably convinced her that you're a life-saving hero, instead of the card playing bum you really are.

Yes, occasions such as these pose no real problem to the mind that is well trained, practiced, and polished to perfection in excuse-making. In fact, such occasions can be quite beneficial, for they provide the practice necessary to prevent our getting rusty.

Excuses play a vital role in all our lives, not only in the family but in all other social, economic, and political systems as well. And it is for precisely this reason that we should see to it that our children master the talent of making good excuses at an early age. Their formal learning of this talent should begin in grade school, where, along with the three R's, they would be taught the basics of acceptable excuse making, and continue throughout their years of education. Before you scoff at the idea, think about it. Excuses are much more necessary than some of the things they're being taught now. How many times in your life has it been essential that you know the exact date of the Battle of Waterloo? How many times outside of an algebra class, have you had to find X? Neither have I. Now think of all the times when you needed to find a good excuse. See what I mean about excuses being so vital? Without them our system just wouldn't work at all.

Did you ever stop to think about what would happen if people suddenly

stopped believing each other's excuses? The whole world would be in chaos: politics would go right out the window; governments would crumble; families would be torn apart; and business after business would go bankrupt. There would be a rush on the stock market and the unemployment rate would skyrocket. All of our economic, political, and social systems would collapse. The world as we know it would cease to exist.

Terrifying, isn't it? Terrifying but, unfortunately, true.

So the next time someone comes to you with a lousy excuse, please, at least act like you believe him. If you don't, you might start a trend. And the results could be devastating.

What Am I To Be?

Tony Davis

What am I to be?
Through my years I have toyed with
And tossed away more ideas than a scientist.
I have come up with nothing.
And now I find myself becoming a man
No longer a boy, and it disturbs me . . .
So what am I to be?

Stars in the sky have been wondered on
Since man's beginning;
But a man cannot wonder about himself
And burn bright as those stars.
Each day as the sun bows down
And day turns to night,
Polaris takes its haughty place
In the night-time sky.
When shall I find my place in life?
What am I to be?

What am I to be?
I think I want to be a man of words,
A man of thought and literature.
So I can wonder about the stars
And all things
That should be
Wondered about.

The Pleasures of Backpacking

Linda Bachman

Could this possibly have happened to my friend and me? I don't see how. The captain told us that we'd do a little hiking, set up camp, and maybe build a good roaring fire. The excursion was nothing of the kind.

It was almost a four hour's drive to the starting station. When we got there we were assigned a pile containing our camping gear. My best friend and I finally found a straggler to help us correctly pack the supplies in our backpacks. After filling our canteens with water, we started out. We had to walk two miles to get to the beginning of the trail, which we were to hike. Many members of our group were already red-faced when we got there, but there are always exceptions to the rule. One girl, decked out in her faded green fatigues, had on tons of dark green eye shadow and quite a bit of blood red lipstick. She remained without a drop of sweat throughout the entire trip. She attracted the attention of the entire male group that was with us.

We began hiking the trail at four o'clock that afternoon. Out of the five groups involved, we were number three. Each group had a ranger, complete with radio, to insure that the right directions were taken. We had one other new member in our group — Jack. He was relatively small-boned and carried a bright orange tent in his backpack. This pack must have weighed about twenty pounds more than ours. Rain was in the forecast, so he assured us that when it rained that evening he would stay high and dry in his waterproof tent while we would be drenched by the pounding rain. We tried to overlook him.

The sights on the trail were refreshing. Trees, briars, and wild flowers flourished by its sides. Small foot bridges led the trail over wet areas. These bridges were two feet wide and several feet above the ground. They seemed to add a unique simplicity to the atmosphere.

After a mile or so of hiking, the backpacks became extremely heavy, especially for my friend and me who have little meat on our shoulders. The frame of the backpack was metal and insisted on bruising us at each step. Our group took a ten minute break every hour or so. During each break, I dropped my pack to the ground and sat down to relax my tired muscles. Everyone followed this procedure except David, who stood pack in place ready for the hike to go on. His refusal of relaxation impressed all of us. His body appeared to be as sturdy as the trees beside him.

Later, a captain from another group joined us. He wore dark glasses and carried an expensive walking cane. When asked how much further it was to camp, he told us that we'd be there in thirty minutes. He also informed us that three kegs of rootbeer were waiting for our arrival. (This information cheered many dry throats.) Thirty minutes later we were still far from camp. Many of us had emptied our canteens and had begun to wonder why we had come. Each time that we asked the captain how much further it was, he said that it was about thirty minutes away. To forget the long stretch of trail and our weariness, the ranger sang marching songs while we echoed almost all of them.

During the entire hike only one member fell flat on his face: the captain. His fall bruised his knee, causing it to turn a dull blue-grey. Later we came to a footbridge that the army had conveniently neglected to finish. It consisted of two ten-foot boards, about three feet apart, that covered a ditch seven feet deep

with briars lying-in-wait for someone to fall. It seemed easy to cross when I was on the bank, but it became perilous when half way across. We expected the captain to fall because of his nervousness, but he made it across, inch . . . by inch. Jack stumbled down one side of the ditch, stomped through the briars, and clambered up the other side. One guy, Paul, decided to walk on a single beam. After a few steps he lost his balance and fell into some briars at the edge of the bank. He was left unscarred, except for his pride.

Darkness was upon us as we reached the camp. We'd been hiking for four hours. In camp the females were instructed to put their tents up in a certain place called a "corral." This "corral" was marked off by toilet paper. Disgustedly we walked toward it.

After our tents were up we all met around a big camp fire to enjoy a few rootbeers and to relax. Much later that evening, everyone settled down and silence swallowed all. The clear starry night promised another thrilling day of backpacking.

Blue

Tammy Smith

When you first came by, my heart exploded into
A million prisms, brilliant bands of color
To match my every mood, moods that
Were possible only because of you.
In the blue light I saw your sky-blue eyes,
Shy-blue eyes, eyes that remained constant, telling me
That everything was possible.
Now, two years later, the prisms have turned into
Jagged shards of cheap glass;
But still, in the blue bands, I can see your
Everlasting eyes, and I turn away, afraid they
Will evaporate
With the rest.

Voyagers

Sara Williamson

"Captain Zeenar, what are we to do?" asked Doctor Varuk. "We are hopelessly lost, our ship is damaged, and our food supply is getting dangerously low."

Young Captain Zeenar looked around the flight deck of his first-command craft as if looking for the answers and replied, "Varuk, call all the officers to my quarters for a meeting immediately. We must make some decisions."

Doctor Varuk, First Mate Zara, Scientologist Matro, and Engineer Emuk gathered in Zeenar's cabin for what was to be the most important meeting of their lives. Captain Zeenar explained their situation simply and directly, "We are lost. After the comet storm and the black hole we went through at the edge of our solar system, I'm afraid we are light years off course. Finding our galaxy may be impossible. The ship is damaged, our tracking gear and force field are totally destroyed. I see no alternative but to find a place to repair our ship and resupply before we can hunt for our world."

Varuk paced the room; Matro stared transfixed, yet not seeing. While Emuk sat studying diagrams in total silence, Zara searched each face trying to find comfort or hope. Zara was the first to speak, "Captain, if we are so far away from our own planet, how do we contact someone to help repair our ship? Where do we get the necessary metals and electronics?"

"I know there will be problems," replied Captain Zeenar, "but if you have any other ideas or alternatives, let's discuss them now."

"Yes," stated Emuk, "there will be many problems." "We are farther advanced in these fields than all other inhabited planets we have visited. Even if we could find a friendly planet, we need help with the electronics, and we do not have the facilities to do some of the component work ourselves."

The room fell into silence as the ship's officers stared at their captain. Years of training had put this youth into a high ranking position that now demanded a decision that held two hundred lives in the balance. Perspiration beaded on his forehead as the pressure of all eyes upon him increased. "Then it's settled," he said, "we don't have any alternatives. We begin looking for a landing site immediately. We will inform the crew when a site has been located."

Days passed, weeks passed; rations decreased rapidly. The eighteenth day from the meeting, Matro reported to the captain, "Sir, we have a possibility. Approximately four days' travel time from here is a large semi-aqueous planet that may support intelligent life. Our scanners can tell us little at this distance, but I suggest we change course for a closer inspection."

"Set up the coordinates. Change course as soon as possible," ordered Zeenar. Relieved of some pressure, Zeenar headed to his quarters for his best rest in almost forty days.

* *

Unable to sleep and aggravated by mosquitoes, Susan Reynolds gazed out the window. Since Dale had left to hunt for a job, she spent many sleepless hours looking at the stars, wondering if Dale were looking at the same stars. He had been gone so long, the house was getting even more run down. The pump

was sluggish, the fuses kept blowing and two of the screens had large holes in them. Susan missed Dale; so did the house.

★ ★

Two days later Matro asked for a staff meeting to report his findings. Anxiously, all department heads gathered to hear the news the rumors were about. "We have good news," he beamed. "There are reasons to believe that the beings on this planet we're observing are not only intelligent, but friendly. I, at this point, see no reason not to land and ask for help in our endeavor to get home." The staff applauded the idea, especially Zeenar. He had made the right decision, his crew would be saved, and one day return home.

"Landing Day," as it was being called, presented many difficulties. Malfunctions seemed to occur in almost every sector. Zeenar began to wonder if he could make a safe landing. Again the young captain felt the pressures of his command.

At last they were through the outer atmosphere, a little more damaged, but much more sure of success. Directional automatic steering was completely destroyed, and Captain Zeenar steered manually to a large glass-like plateau. Landing was rough, but they had made it.

Before disembarking, outside atmosphere was checked. Minor adjustments would have to be made in the breathing apparatus before they could leave the ship, but everything was working well.

Volunteers from all stations wanted to be among the first to see this new planet. Each sector was allowed two members to represent them in the landing party. As these members assembled to disembark, the whole crew was full of anticipation, edged with caution. With those thoughts, they set out to seek help and knowledge for their race.

★ ★

Susan lay on the sofa, starting to doze while her favorite television show was on. "We will return to our story after these commercial words," the station announcer said. Susan, aroused by a thud, reached out for her coke on the coffee table. "What in the . . .?" she cried, seeing a large silver metallic-like beetle on the coffee table. As she looked, she saw fifteen or twenty smaller silver beetles apparently coming from the larger one. She hurried into the kitchen to get the bug spray and some paper towels; she fiercely saturated all the beetles on the table. Satisfied when all movement had stopped, she wiped the glass surface clean with a paper towel. Throwing it into the waste can she mumbled, "No matter now; they're dead."

The Sea-Tossed Love

Jennifer Gatlin

The waters were rough and brutal, and the sea tossed the small fishing craft back and forth, as if in a game it were playing. Joseph was getting old and sick. The cold New England winter winds no longer stung the thick layers of skin that had wrinkled with age and hard beatings from other winter winds, their salty needles piercing each pore in his flesh. His eyes sagged like long black bags, but their beautiful blue color seemed to have been stolen from the great Atlantic that he loved so. It probably had reflected in his eyes for so long that they had acquired its color.

Some of the New England old-timers said that he must be the loneliest man in the whole village because he had never chosen a wife in all his sixty-three years. He had been quite content living with the only woman he ever loved. She was large and wore a gown of blue that moved with such grace no mortal could have ever competed with her. Besides, the woman had provided for him since he was a child. His love, his life was all centered around this woman although she had held many other men in her arms. No matter how cruel she proved to be to them, they all loved her with a passion they could not explain. She was the sea.

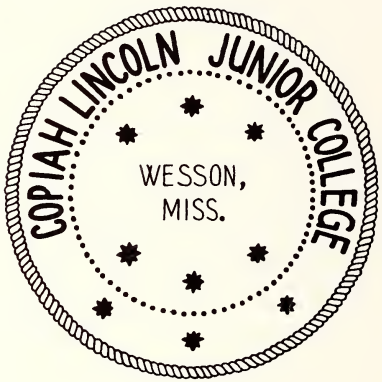
This morning he had left St. Paul harbor in the foggy mist. As he was leaving, he caught his last glimpse of the leather fishermen who sat in front of the rusty old fishery with pipes in their mouths, leaving clouds of black in the air. He raised his hand good-bye, and they returned the gesture. He could hear her calling and he must answer. He was tired, needing to rest his weary bones. He wanted to die in his lady's arms. Suddenly the bitter pains began, but the tears were washed away by a splash of water gently covering his face, a tender kiss from his lady — a tender kiss good-bye. He smiled because he was with her, then peacefully relaxed in her arms.

The Hunt

Alvin Steen

After leaving the house around 4:30 a.m. one fall morning, I started toward the back field to a lone hickory tree overlooking a thirty acre rye grass field. I climbed the tree to a comfortable tree stand and tried to relax but the wind and light mist made it impossible. As daylight broke, the wildlife started coming out. A flock of crows tormented a large swamp owl as he glided by effortlessly, trying to get to his sleeping quarters.

Suddenly the silence was shattered by a large gobbler and five hens taking to the air in flight after discovering my presence. A red fox swiftly trotted across the field with a dead rabbit, taking it to the den. As I gazed around the outside perimeter of the field, I noticed several deer slipping in for a meal. I slowly raised the rifle but discovered it was a doe and her two fawns. I had relaxed and leaned back once again when suddenly two bucks stepped into sight. I slowly raised the rifle, took aim and squeezed the trigger. The deer dropped in its tracks, and as I approached, I found it difficult to make my way to the deer. My eyes continue to fill with water as I wondered if he could walk again.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